



# MESA PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMERCIAL FACILITIES

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## GOLD MEDAL 2025

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15 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN  
2011-2025  
APPROVED FEBRUARY 2011



**Mission** The Parks, Recreation and Commercial Facilities Department (PRCF) is committed to filling our facilities and programs with satisfied guests.

**Vision** Exceed Expectations

**Motto** Be responsible

## PRCF FAST FACTS

57 Parks (923 Acres) + 135 Basins (371 Acres) +  
Undeveloped Parks (more than 900 Acres)

Seventy-one (71) multipurpose athletic fields, including  
eight (8) specialty complexes:

**HOHOKAM STADIUM:** 12,900 seating capacity and Fitch  
Park Baseball Training Complex

**MESA CONVENTION CENTER:** 40,000 square feet of  
meeting and convention space

**MESA AMPHITHEATRE:** 4,950 seating capacity

**MESA CEMETERY:** 70 acres

**FIVE (5) RECREATION CENTERS:** With 134,154 Square  
Feet of Space

**NINE (9) SWIMMING POOLS:** With 5,251,000 Gallons  
of Water

**TWO (2) SKATE/BIKE PARKS**

**TWO (2) TENNIS FACILITIES**

**ONE (1) GOLF COURSE**

Sting, Melissa Ethridge and Ringo Starr have all  
performed at the Mesa Amphitheatre!

It was 1952 when the Chicago Cubs first brought major  
league spring training to Mesa.

Country western singer Waylon Jennings, Ernesto  
Miranda (of Miranda Rights fame), and the four  
founding fathers of Mesa are all buried at the Mesa  
Cemetery.

### City Council

Scott Smith, Mayor  
Alex Finter  
Dennis Kavanaugh  
Dave Richins  
Scott Somers  
Dina Higgins  
Chris Glover

### Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

Mark Yarbrough, Chair  
Don Goodrum, Vice Chair  
Kent Bulkley  
Milt Fort  
Steve Ikeda  
David Martinez  
Bert Millett  
Kathleen Rahn  
Matt Shaffer  
Marilyn Wilson  
Ron Wills

### City Manager

Chris Brady, City Manager  
Kari Kent, Deputy City Manager  
Jack Friedline, Deputy City Manager

### PRCF Management

Marc Heirshberg, Director  
J.D. Dockstader, Assistant Director  
Mike Holste, Assistant Director




Dear friend of the Mesa park system:

The early visionaries of the Mesa park system made no small plans, they dared to dream. Seventy-five years later, we still marvel at their vision as we provide ongoing stewardship of one of the finest park systems in America. We emulate the dedication, uncompromising will to succeed, and the value they placed on providing relevant park and recreation opportunities. We proudly continue the tradition of shaping the character of the city and enhancing the quality of life residents through quality parks and recreation.

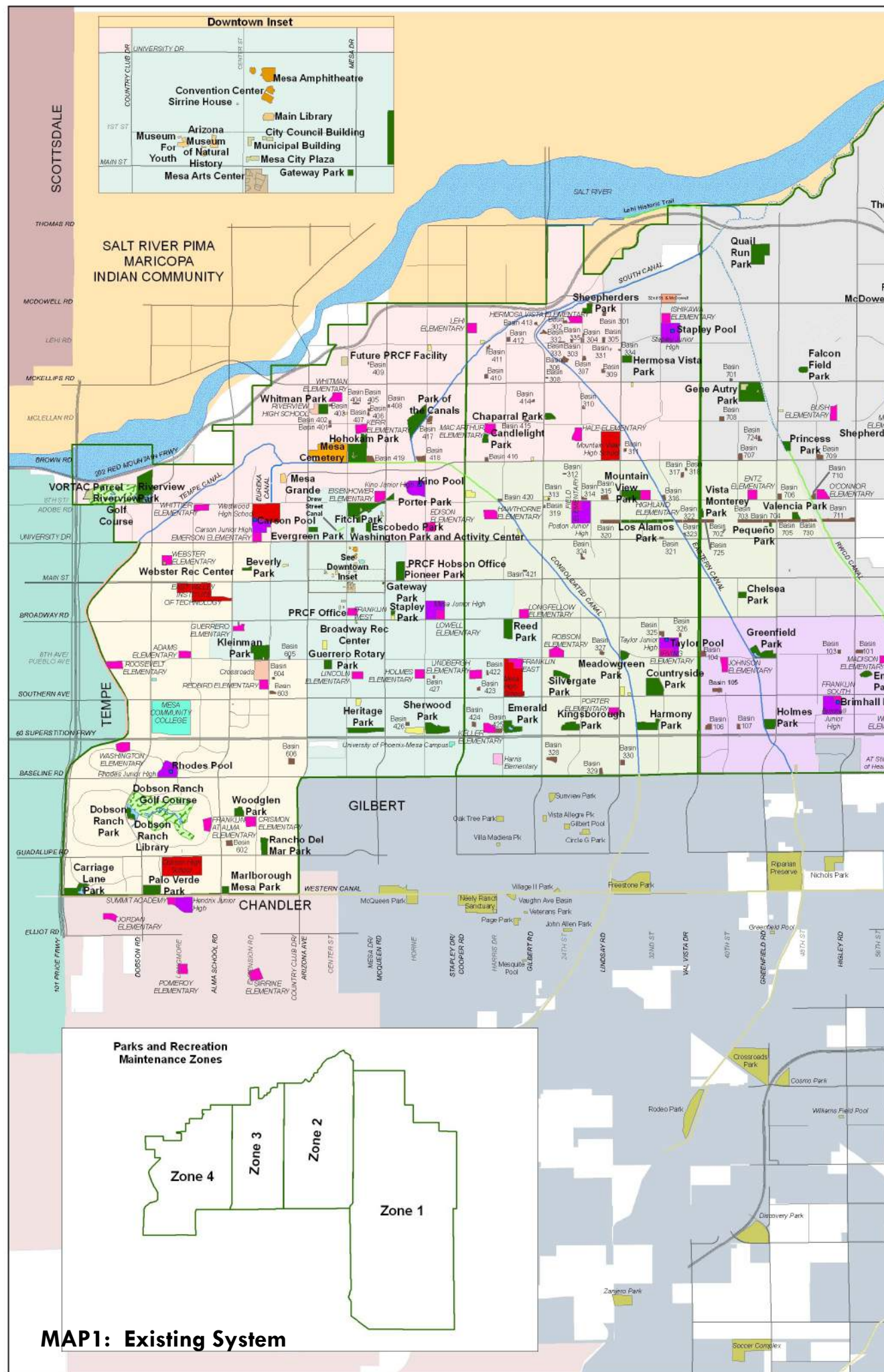
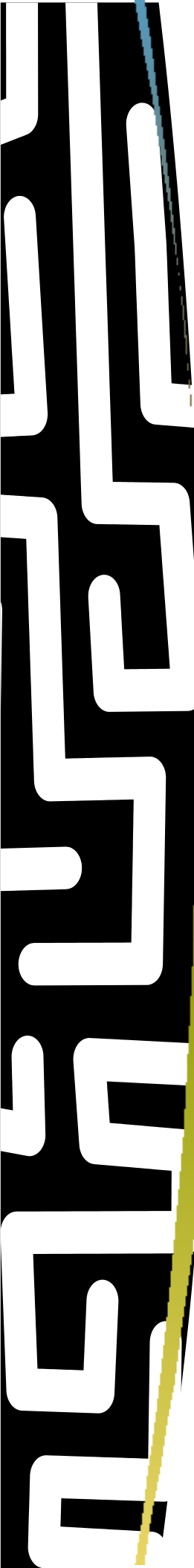
As Mesa and the lifestyles of its residents continue to change, the Parks, Recreation and Commercial Facilities Department will also continue to evolve, sparking new development and providing, parks, programs, facilities, and services that are relevant to peoples lives. To ensure future generations have an opportunity to enjoy an outstanding parks and recreation system, we approach the future with a focus on sustainability.

It is with great pride that we set forth the direction for the Mesa Parks, Recreation and Commercial Facilities Department in this, our Gold Medal 2025 Plan, a 15 year comprehensive planning document. We invite you to experience and enjoy the many parks, programs, facilities, and services that the City of Mesa offers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marc Heirshberg", with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Marc Heirshberg, Director  
Parks, Recreation and Commercial Facilities



MAP1: Existing System





**Parks, Recreation  
and Commercial  
Facilities  
Department**

**Facilities Map**

**Legend**

- Parks
- Future Parks
- Basins
- Golf Courses
- Pools
- City Buildings**
  - Mesa Arts Center
  - Convention Center
  - Library
  - Museum
  - Recreation Centers
  - Staff Offices
- Multituse Path System**
  - Improved Path
  - Unimproved Path
  - Cemetery
- Mesa Public Schools**
  - Elementary Schools
  - Junior High Schools
  - High Schools
  - Focus Schools
- Gilbert Public Schools**
  - Elementary School
  - Junior High School
  - High School
  - Alternative School
  - Charter Schools
  - Colleges/Universities
  - Gilbert Parks
  - Usery Mtn. Park
- Council Districts**
  - District 1
  - District 2
  - District 3
  - District 4
  - District 5
  - District 6

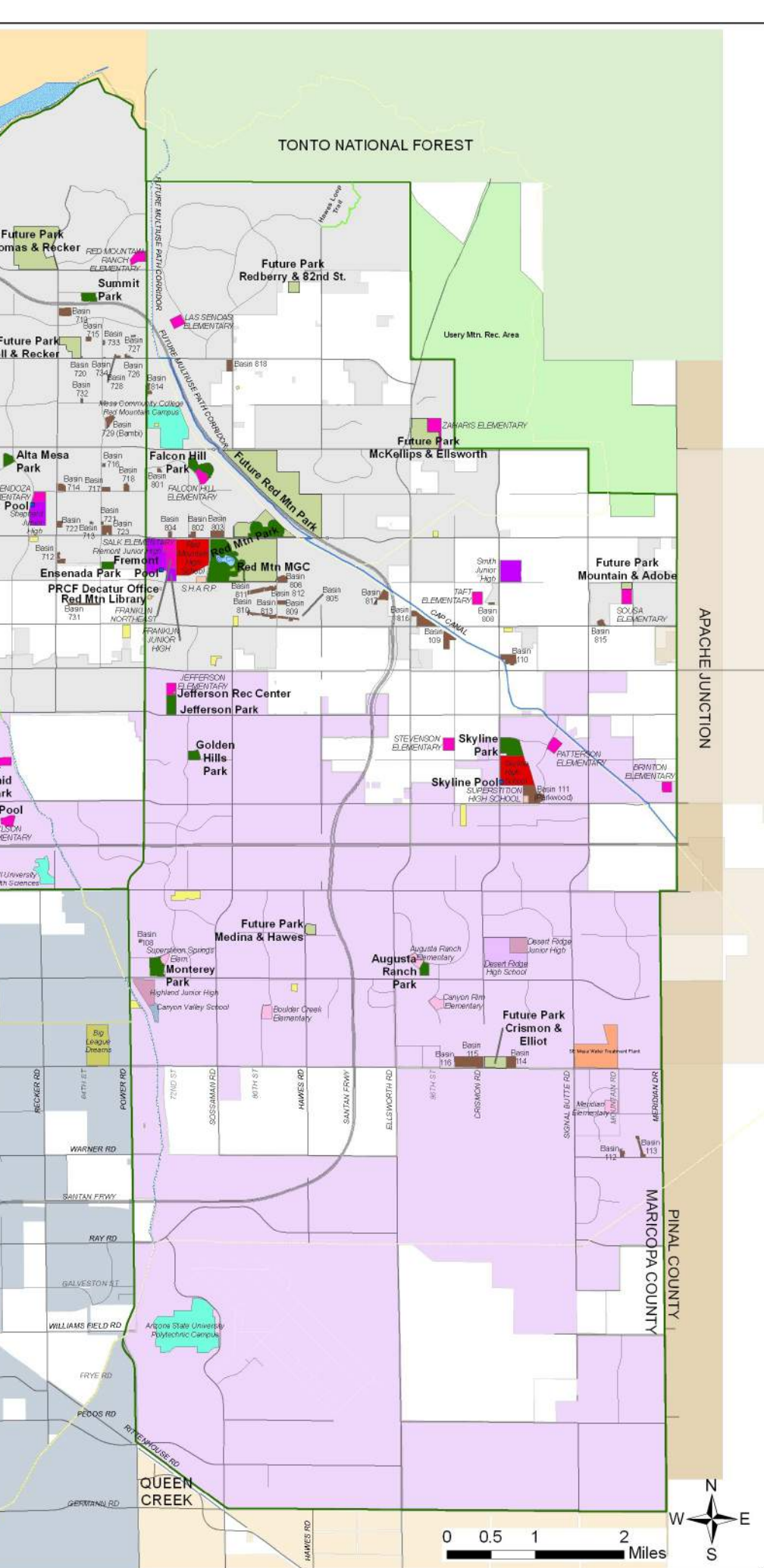
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Updated 12/30/16 by PRCF Planning & Development





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mesa City Council's vision for the future continues the long tradition of preserving land with an emphasis on connecting people to the land and to each other. The Mesa Parks, Recreation and Commercial Facilities Department (PRCF) will continue to enhance the quality of life for Mesa residents and will play a significant role in shaping the character of the City through quality parks and recreation.

### The Direction

The poet R.S. Thomas said, "We only know who we are by knowing where we are. A particular place creates around us a unique culture that gives us not only our identity but also our vision and values." Parks and recreation services can contribute greatly to a community's sense of place and its quality of life. The American Planning Association notes that "parks create a sense of place by connecting residents to one another and to their larger environment....They can physically reconnect communities to themselves by creating linkages or restoring historic connections broken by highways, sprawl, and poor planning."

**Be a sustainable organization** When considering how work will be conducted by the PRCF Department, sustainability tops the list. This will require meeting current park and recreation needs without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by balancing environmental, economic, and equity concerns. The Gold Medal 2025 plan calls for the development and implementation of a sustainability plan that will further articulate how sustainability will be integrated into the everyday work of the department.

**Provide urban forests, natural areas, and waters that endure and captivate** Land, trees, and water—the foundation of our park system – require long term care and investment. Parks are protected to benefit the entire city; therefore, all

residents have a stake in the future of these resources and bear responsibility for their stewardship. The PRCF Department is committed to providing leadership in natural resource management, connecting people to their natural environment, and fostering a sense of stewardship. The plan articulates goals and strategies that call for responsible management of the parks system's natural resources, programming that connects people with the natural environment, protection and care of trees, and development of partnerships that will further the goals of protecting natural resources and connecting people to them. Gold Medal 2025 also calls for balancing the distribution of natural areas throughout the city.

**Deliver recreation that inspires personal growth, healthy lifestyles, and a sense of community** The future calls for leadership that inspires all people to engage in recreation. In this plan, recreation includes all activities that make leisure time more interesting, enjoyable and personally satisfying. Furthermore, this plan recognizes that the benefits of quality recreation are astonishing, ranging from the development of life-long skills to fostering community and crime prevention. The PRCF Department is committed to enriching the lives of individuals, families and the entire community through positive and fulfilling recreational experiences. It will offer

physical, artistic, environmental, and social activities throughout the city. Gold Medal 2025 sets forth goals and strategies to support the health and fitness goals of residents and to connect people to each other through recreation.

### Create dynamic parks that shape city character and meet diverse community needs

As the city's demographics evolve the PRCF Department must create parks and amenities that are flexible, sustainable, and aesthetically beautiful, and with which residents and visitors can identify. This includes recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce that reflects the city's demographics. Achieving this vision requires that the organization listen carefully, anticipate future needs, explore new operating models, and obtain new funding sources. The department will continue to be a leader in focusing on parks and recreation, the role parks and recreation plays in stretching the imagination for shaping the city, and seeking partners to fulfill the mission of the organization. The plan calls for the development of park plans for areas where the city's population is growing or expected to grow. The plan also calls for determining the service and delivery goals of existing and new recreation activities through thoughtful examination. This will allow the department to be proactive in offering new facilities, removing outdated or under-utilized facilities, collaborating and partnering with other service providers to prevent duplication.

### Maintain a safe place to play, celebrate, contemplate and recreate

Keeping the parks safe requires a long-term commitment to people and places by the PRCF Department and its many partners. Safety, both real and perceived, is achieved through a combination of preventive and corrective measures. Delivering consistently

safe parks also requires that they are well maintained and designed to prevent accidental injury. The plan calls for bolstering preventive measures that included developing ongoing relationships with park visitors, setting clear expectations of appropriate behavior in the park system, providing training to staff and visitors, and providing parks and facilities that are safe by design.

### The Research and Outreach

The Gold Medal 2025 plan recognizes the organization's need to evolve to meet the changing parks and recreation needs of Mesa residents. The directions set forth in the plan are guided by the insights gained through community outreach and surveys. The changes in Mesa that are most significant to future park and recreation delivery include:

- **Demographic Shifts:** The city continues to become more diverse and home to an increasing number of foreign-born residents. The number of households without children present also appears to have increased.
- **Recreation Trends:** Adults, especially Baby Boomers, are staying active longer. Young adults raised on youth athletics are seeking to maintain active lifestyles. In addition interest in non-traditional and self-directed recreation is rising.
- **Health Trends:** Nationally, research shows obesity and related health concerns are rising along with health care costs. Parks and recreation plays an important role in supporting the active lifestyle that can reduce health concerns and bolster preventive care.



# THE VISION... THE PROMISE...

## The Vision

The **vision statement** describes what the organization hopes to become by 2025: In 2025, The Mesa Parks, Recreation and Commercial Facilities system is a premier destination that welcomes and captivates residents and visitors. The park system and its beauty are part of the daily life and shape the character of Mesa. Natural, cultural, artistic, historical, and recreational resources cultivate outstanding experiences, health, and enjoyment, fun and learning for all people. The parks system is sustainable, well maintained, and safe. It meets the needs of individuals, families and communities. The focus on preserving open space remains, with a strong emphasis on connecting people to the land and to each other. Aware of its values to their lives, residents are proud stewards and supporters of an extraordinary parks and recreation system.

## The Promise

The **Gold Medal 2025 plan** embraces innovation. It also communicates that ongoing learning and community outreach and research are required to provide the best park and recreation services to Mesa residents and visitors. The success of this vision is tied to the commitment of city leaders, city administration, PRCF staff, our partners, and to the value the community places on maintaining and improving the Mesa parks system.

As this plan is implemented residents and visitors can look forward to an exciting future in which services are continually evaluated and improved to ensure community needs are met, facilities are renewed, connection with the natural environment is strengthened, sustainable practices are expanded, and parks are safe for everyone.





## Gold Medal 2025

The vision statement and four vision themes will guide future development, operations and maintenance of the Mesa parks system in 2025. A series of goals and strategies for each vision theme further guides the work of the City of Mesa's PRCF Department.

**Vision Statement:** In 2025, The Mesa Parks, Recreation and Commercial Facilities system is a premier destination that welcomes and captivates residents and visitors. The parks system and its beauty are part of the daily life and shape the character of Mesa. Natural, cultural, artistic, historical, and recreational resources cultivate outstanding experiences, health, and enjoyment, fun and learning for all people. The parks system is sustainable, well maintained, and safe. It meets the needs of individuals, families and communities. The focus on preserving open space remains, with a strong emphasis on connecting people to the land and to each other. Aware of its values to their lives, residents are proud stewards and supporters of extraordinary parks and recreation system.

**Vision Themes:** As a renowned and award winning park and recreation system, the City of Mesa PRCF Department delivers:

### VISION THEME 1:

*Urban forests, natural areas, and waters*  
that endure and captivate

### VISION THEME 2:

*Recreation*  
that inspires personal growth, healthy lifestyles, and a sense of community

### VISION THEME 3:

*Dynamic parks*  
that shape city character and meet diverse community needs

### VISION THEME 4:

*A safe place*  
to play, celebrate, contemplate, and recreate



## VISION THEME 1

### *urban forests, natural areas, and waters that endure and captivate*

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Lands, trees, and water – the foundation of the park system – require long-term investment and care. Parks are protected to benefit the entire city; therefore, all residents have a stake in the future of those resources and bear responsibility for their stewardship. The Mesa PRCF Department is committed to providing leadership in natural resource management, connecting people to their natural environment, and fostering a sense of stewardship.

*“Conservation means development as much as it does protection. I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us.”*

*~Theodore Roosevelt*

### CONNECTION, LEADERSHIP, STEWARDSHIP

Preserving, managing, and enhancing the city’s natural lands, waters, and urban forests is a core responsibility of the Mesa PRCF Department. For nearly 75 years, the Department has protected and preserved natural areas for future generations; monitored the quality of lakes, waterways, and streams; and managed trees throughout parks and natural areas. The Department creates opportunities for people to experience the beauty of nature through a variety of programs, self-guided explorations, and gardens. All of these efforts attract people to the natural environment and foster the next generation of stewards.

**Findings:** The following findings helped shape the goals and strategies for Vision Theme 1:

### Community Outreach and Research

Mesa residents value the natural environment and seek opportunities to spend and preserve time in nature. When asked to rate the importance of various park system amenities, residents rank natural areas highest, related amenities such as trails, and environmental programming also receive high rankings. When comparing resident satisfaction and the level of importance they place on amenities and activities in the park system, the satisfaction level was significantly lower than the importance level for protected natural areas and environmental programming. This indicates additional focus is needed for these areas. Within the natural environment, residents indicate that they enjoy walking, biking, hiking and viewing nature. Residents indicate that they want more focus on keeping existing parks clean and well maintained, preserving more natural areas, providing access to natural areas and implementing environmental education programming.

### Impact of the Built Environment

As the East Valley continues to grow, access to natural areas decreases and open space becomes increasingly fragmented. Mesa's natural areas become refuges within

otherwise developed settings. Consequently, natural areas within the Mesa parks system are more susceptible to invasive species. Lakes, creeks, and other water bodies are especially affected by flooding, shoreline erosion, and other storm water impacts. Applying best practices in land and water management will help mitigate the impact on natural areas. Those best practices require stable, adequate funding to be effective.

### Sustainability

Sustainability is most commonly associated with the protection and management of the natural environment. Mesa supports the perspective that the environment, economics, and equity are equally important when considering sustainability. Therefore, sustainability is integrated throughout this document and featured specifically in the values section. A sustainability plan for the department will further articulate how sustainability will be incorporated throughout the entire system.

### Disconnected from Nature

Nationally, there is growing concern that people, especially children, are losing their connection to nature. Some cite technology as directly competing for their leisure time.

While others fear that technology is replacing hands-on learning with indirect learning. There is also concern that immigrant populations are not pursuing nature-based activities in their leisure time. Forging a connection between people and natural areas will help ensure long-term stewardship of the park system and build valuable life lessons.

### Changing Conditions and Regulations

The park system is affected by local, regional, national and even global changes, many of which demand the commitment of significant resources. Over the past 50 years the park system has fought invasive species, managed specific tree diseases, and adapted to new regulatory requirements. Looking to the future, new invasive species, diseases, regulation and the effect of pollution and climate change will require increased commitment and financial investment in managing the city's natural resources.



## VISION THEME 1: GOALS AND STRATEGIES:

*urban forests, natural areas, and waters  
that endure and captivate*

### GOAL

Sound Management techniques provide healthy, diverse, and sustainable natural resources.

### STRATEGIES:

- Develop and implement a natural area management plan that ensures natural areas (desert uplands, lakes, etc) are ecologically diverse, sustainable, and managed with scientifically based methods, giving preference to remnant native plant communities.
- Develop and implement management plans for all lakes and water bodies within the Mesa parks system that ensure these resources will be protected and enhanced.
- Develop and implement a land management plan for the grounds, trees, and gardens of parks and golf courses in the Mesa park system.
- Provide leadership and coordination with area partners and regulatory agencies in monitoring, regulating and improving water quality and ecological integrity of water bodies throughout the park system. Enforce regulations and policies as necessary.
- Collaborate with neighborhood/ community, state and federal organizations to plan for and fund ongoing ecological management and restoration.
- Manage rodent populations to mitigate impacts on significant natural resources.



### GOAL:

Residents and visitors enjoy and understand the natural environment.

### STRATEGIES:

- Encourage people to experience the natural environment by providing and maintaining where feasible trails and access points that serve people of all ages and abilities.
- Provide environmental education, and nature based recreation, in cooperation with local schools, that encourages all people especially children and new populations, to explore, protect, understand, and become stewards of natural areas
- Develop a strong connection between neighborhood/community center programming and the natural areas in the parks system.
- Provide or support other entities in providing programming that teaches residents to reduce their individual negative impact on the natural environment.



## VISION THEME 1: GOALS AND STRATEGIES:

*urban forests, natural areas, and waters  
that endure and captivate*

### GOAL

People and the environment benefit from the expansion and protection of the natural resources.

### STRATEGIES:

- Ensure day-to-day operation and construction does not damage natural resources within parklands, and require replacement when loss or damage occurs.
- Define, inventory, and track natural resources classified as significant.
- Within the park system, protect natural resources recognized as significant city, regional, or national resources due to historical, ecological, or aesthetic value.
- Enforce leash laws and use of designated trails to protect sensitive ecosystems and wildlife.
- Balance public access to natural areas throughout the city, giving priority to acquiring developing and/or restoring areas in West and Southwest Mesa.
- Enhance natural features in neighborhood and community parks to increase residents' awareness and enjoyment of the natural environment.



### GOAL:

Knowledgeable stewards and partners generously support the system's natural resources.

### STRATEGIES:

- Develop programming to educate residents and park visitors of the importance of preserving and properly managing natural resources for health, water, air quality and general environmental benefits.
- Be a resource for residents and visitors seeking information about the park system's natural resources and open spaces.
- Engage volunteers in the restoration, maintenance and preservation of the system's natural resources.
- Lead efforts to establish public and private partnerships that enhance the City of Mesa's management of natural areas. Sponsor programs and events that promote exploring, protecting, and enhancing these resources.
- Strengthen opportunities for research and cooperative exchange of information with universities, state and federal agencies, and recognized experts.
- Participate in efforts sponsored by local partners that enhance the City's goals for managing natural areas within the parks system.
- Educate and advocate developers to create connectivity and open space to enhance natural resources where possible.



## VISION THEME 2

### Recreation

that inspires personal growth, healthy lifestyles, and a sense of community.

The future calls for leadership that inspires all people to engage in recreation. Recreation includes all activities that make leisure time more interesting, enjoyable, and personally satisfying. The benefits of quality recreation are astonishing, ranging from the development of lifelong skills to fostering community to crime prevention. The City of Mesa PRCF Department is committed to enhancing the lives of individuals, families, and the entire community through positive and fulfilling recreation experiences. This will require offering physical, artistic, environmental, and social activities tailored to the diverse communities throughout the city.

*"Play for adults is recreation — the renewal of life;  
for children it is growth — the gaining of life."*

*~Joseph Lee*

*"We do not cease to play because we grow old.  
We grow old because we cease to play."*

*~George Bernard Shaw*

### HEALTHY FUN

Whether one wishes to walk along the canals, coach a sport, help restore a park area, picnic under a tree, have fun on a playground, join a softball team, watch a ball game, learn to golf, attend a concert, or watch nature unfold, the PRCF Department provides a wide range of recreation choices. The department's numerous recreation and volunteer opportunities inspire people to make a difference in their own lives, in the lives of others, and to their surroundings.

**Findings:** The following findings helped shape the goals and strategies for Vision Theme 2:

### Community Outreach and Research

Overall residents feel that the City of Mesa's PRCF Department is doing a good job of providing for our citizen's park and recreation needs. Residents say it is important for the department to provide health and physical fitness opportunities and positive recreation activities for children and youth. They frequently mention the need for additional or improved programming, particularly for children. The main barriers to participating in recreation activities and programs were lack of time and concerns about personal safety. Residents rank the Red Mountain Multigenerational Center, outdoor aquatic centers, athletic fields and programs for all ages as highly important. Program recommendations typically focused on providing increased programming for each age group. Common requests were for increased physical fitness classes, as well as, increased programming focusing on personal enrichment. When considering recreation centers and outdoor aquatic centers some residents experienced gaps between what was offered at one center vs. what another has to offer. Suggestions to improve recreation centers and outdoor aquatic centers include:

- Better or improved access to information about available

programs, services and activities being offered.

- More updated centers with modern features.
- Expanded weekend hours.
- Extending the summer swim season at outdoor pools.

### Community Center Model

Mesa residents enjoy a greater diversity of recreational interests and lifestyles than in the 1970's when the current recreation center model was designed for the City. The small size and proximity of existing recreation centers adequately served that earlier era, but no longer support the extensive recreation needs of today's children, youth, young adults, single adults, older adults, and families, making it difficult to foster community among diverse lifestyles. A new model is needed; one that retains the personal touch and easy access of the 1970's model, while effectively meeting the recreation needs of today's diverse communities. As current centers are increasingly in need of upgrading, it is vital that the new model be cost-efficient, and maximize the value of existing development, operations, and maintenance resources.

### Health, Physical Fitness, and Wellness

Since their creation, parks have been viewed as a vital key to the health and wellness of

residents and visitors. The challenges facing society today may be different, but the expectations of the parks system have not changed. Today's park system continues to be a positive influence by aiding individual health and fitness, and by countering obesity and related complications, isolation from community, and the stress of hectic lifestyles. Increasingly, people recognize the relationship between health care costs and lifestyle choices. Parks and recreation are a link to the active lifestyles that can have a profound effect on community wellness.



## VISION THEME 2: GOALS AND STRATEGIES:

### Recreation

that inspires personal growth, healthy lifestyles,  
and a sense of community

#### GOAL

People play, learn, and develop a greater capacity to enjoy life

#### STRATEGIES:

- Provide programming, especially for children, youth and teens in four key areas – physical, artistic, environmental, and social – at a level where quality can be ensured.
- Adapt programming to busy lifestyles and make it easy for individuals and families to participate.
- Enrich physical, artistic, environmental, and social program delivery by partnering with other agencies, professionals, and providers.
- Identify and reduce physical and financial barriers to participation in programming.
- Develop connections between programming in the neighborhood park system and the regional park system.
- Provide opportunities to interpret the park system's history and historic features through venues that are engaging and fun.

#### GOAL:

Residents, visitors and workers enjoy opportunities to improve health and wellness

#### STRATEGIES:

- Provide access and encouragement for children and youth to participate in fundamental level athletics.
- Provide team sports for all age groups.
- Provide opportunities for self-directed recreation throughout the park system.
- Form or encourage groups and clubs that motivate individuals to reach their health and fitness goals.
- Explore ways to integrate non-traditional recreation opportunities for all ages into the park system.
- Provide recreation opportunities that support active lifestyles for workers, before, after, and/or during their work day.
- Continue to be the industry driver in providing recreation opportunities for persons with disabilities.





## VISION THEME 2: GOALS AND STRATEGIES:

### Recreation

that inspires personal growth, healthy lifestyles, and a sense of community

#### GOAL

Volunteers make a vital difference to people, parks, and the community

#### STRATEGIES:

- Provide volunteer opportunities that are meaningful to individuals, of all ages and families and further the work of the Mesa Parks, Recreation, and Commercial Facilities Department.
- Promote volunteer opportunities throughout the Departments operations.
- Recruit neighborhood adults to be positive role models in the lives of youth through mentoring and coaching.
- Encourage and manage large scale volunteer projects and sponsorship opportunities that accommodate the desire of local businesses and corporations to volunteer in the community.
- Initiate, sponsor and support city-wide volunteer projects and events.
- Establish a Park Ambassador program to create a sense of ownership and stewardship throughout the City's neighborhoods.

#### GOAL:

Parks provide a center for community living

#### STRATEGIES:

- Design and implement a community center service model that is relevant to community members, provides a personal touch and easy access for all residents, creates a social gathering space for the community, and is delivered from a sustainable number of community center hubs.
- Cooperatively provide recreation, library and cultural programs for family members to enjoy within the same location.
- Tailor programs and services to the demographics and needs of the community.
- Deliver programming that connects individuals to the land and to each other.



## VISION THEME 2: GOALS AND STRATEGIES:

### Recreation

that inspires personal growth, healthy lifestyles, and a sense of community

#### GOAL

People connect through parks and recreation

#### STRATEGIES:

- Offer a culturally diverse rich selection of programs, expanding cross-cultural programming and interpretive opportunities.
- Be the source of information about recreation opportunities city-wide.
- Develop programming partnerships with groups and organizations that provide life-long learning or work readiness skills, such as community education.
- Encourage opportunities that nurture relationships, develop an understanding of differences, and develop team building skills.
- Encourage the use of parks and/or community venues for public cultural, art, and history events, giving priorities to those that support local artists or foster an understanding of local cultures and history.
- Create and support events, concerts, festivals, athletic events, and celebrations that can be enjoyed by the entire community.
- Tell the story and encourage advocacy for the City and the PRCF Department through interpretive displays and programming, and by celebrating key milestones in our history.
- Create ownership in a sense of place on a local level through volunteerism, events, art, etc., centered around parks and community venues.



## VISION THEME 3

### Dynamic parks

that shape the city character and meet diverse community needs

As the City's demographics evolve, the Mesa PRCF Department must create parks and amenities that are flexible, sustainable, aesthetically beautiful, and with which residents and visitors can identify. Achieving this vision requires careful listening, anticipating future needs, exploring new operating models, and obtaining new funding sources. The PRCF Department will continue to be a strong leader by retaining an independent focus on parks and recreation, stretching the imagination for shaping the city, and seeking partners that will help fulfill the mission of the organization.

*"The public still perceives parks and recreation as a necessary social institution, one with a definite purpose... recreation and parks benefits the economy through its relationship to travel and tourism and aids in the reduction of healthcare costs through its relationship to health and fitness while helping to combat delinquent behavior."*

*~Doug Sessoms*

### Vision, Leadership, Renewal

A rich history of visionary leadership created a legendary park system that shapes the character of Mesa and the quality of life for its residents. To support the park system, a diverse range of funding sources, such as a park dedication ordinance and private partnerships are being explored. Increased emphasis is being placed on sustainable practices, communication, demographic trends, and effective outreach to ensure new and renewed facilities meet the needs of current and future generations.

**Findings:** The following findings helped shape the goals and strategies for Vision Theme 2:

### Community Outreach and Research

According to residents, parks define the city and are very important to the quality of life in Mesa. Residents want more investment in the care and upkeep of park and recreation facilities and enhanced communication as a greater connection between community needs and the services provided by the PRCF Department. They emphasize a desire for greater development of partnerships with public and private entities that further the goals of the City Council. When considering the private sector, they recommend partnerships with local businesses and those that do not commercialize the park system.

### State of the Mesa Parks System

The Mesa park system is comprised of 57 developed parks, 135 basins, and 8 sports complexes. With more than 1,500 acres of developed land and nearly another 1,000 acres of undeveloped land, the City of Mesa still ranks comparatively low when compared with other cities of the same size and population base. While the PRCF Department boasts many deserving successes, these have not been achieved without challenges. After years of budgetary crises we have not been able to sustain or develop adequate facilities for a City of our size. In a recent study conducted by the Trust for Public Land (TPL), Mesa was shown

substantially lagging behind the other 60 cities that were represented:

#### Park Acreage:

##### Park Acres as % of Land Area

■ Mesa ranked 54<sup>th</sup> out of 60 cities

##### Total Parkland per 1000 residents

■ Mesa ranked 54<sup>th</sup> out of 60 cities

#### Facilities:

##### Swimming pools

■ Mesa ranked 23<sup>rd</sup> out of 60 cities

##### Ball diamonds

■ Mesa ranked 25<sup>th</sup> out of 60 cities

##### Dog Parks

■ Mesa ranked 37<sup>th</sup> out of 60 cities

##### Golf Courses

■ Mesa ranked 46<sup>th</sup> out of 60 cities

##### Playgrounds

■ Mesa ranked 50<sup>th</sup> out of 60 cities

##### Recreation Centers

■ Mesa ranked 55<sup>th</sup> out of 60 cities

##### Tennis Courts

■ Mesa ranked 60<sup>th</sup> out of 60 cities

### Growth of the Parks System

Future growth of the system is anticipated in two areas – filling existing service gaps and serving new growth areas that have recently occurred and are

occurring in the City. To reduce existing service gaps, the system will focus on providing parkland within walking distance for each resident and better distribution of significant amenities. Growth areas of the city are typically either former county islands that have been incorporated or areas that were formally non-residential areas that are not well served by park amenities. Park development will focus on serving and helping to spark additional growth in these re-development areas.

### Funding Fluctuations

Traditional capital improvement funding sources have diminished for the PRCF Department in recent years. The City Council has had to reallocate dollars throughout the City in an effort to reduce costs and provide basic service to the citizens of Mesa. While we are hopeful that the City's overall financial health and well-being will soon begin to improve, the unpredictable funding levels make it difficult to project capital improvements for the park system. Cultivating a diverse range of consistent funding sources will help assure a sustainable and well maintained park system.



## VISION THEME 3: GOALS AND STRATEGIES:

### *Dynamic parks* that shape the city character and meet diverse community needs

#### GOAL:

Park facility renewal and development respects history while focusing on sustainability, accessibility, flexibility, and beauty

#### STRATEGIES:

- Integrate sustainable practices, ecological design for landscapes, and green building techniques into new construction and renewal of all amenities, giving priority to those practices that meet or exceed established standards, improve ecological function and minimize longer-term maintenance and operating costs.
- Design and implement a community center hub model that serves community members, is sustainable, and taps the resources of area neighborhood, community and regional parks. (also a concept in Vision Theme 2).
- Ensure the longevity of the City's park system by implementing a sustainable, long-term renewal plan through a complete inventory of the system, life-cycle cost analysis, condition assessment of all park facilities, and financing plan for cycle replacements and infrastructure updates.
- Systematically and regularly develop activity plans that outline the delivery goals, benefits, facilities, operations, and maintenance required to provide each major recreation activity (or group similar activities) in the park system. Use these plans to guide capital improvements and facility maintenance programs.
- Build or renew facilities to meet or exceed standards for accessibility.
- Build quality facilities that can be adapted to new uses as community needs change. One aspect of achieving adaptability is interchangeable playground components and/or sites which encourage free-form play.
- Maintain an inventory of historic structures, documents, landscapes, features, and archeological sites that includes site analysis, evaluation of integrity, and historic significance. Develop a management and interpretive plan for significant historic resources.
- Beautify the park system by integrating gardens and public art into park designs, and provide strategically placed gardens and art displays throughout the city parklands and facilities.







## VISION THEME 3: GOALS AND STRATEGIES:

### Dynamic parks

that shape the city character and meet diverse community needs

#### GOAL:

Parks shape an evolving city.

#### STRATEGIES:

- Working, with city departments, Salt River Project (SRP) and other stakeholders, provide a well-maintained, safe, and continuous trail system.
- Balance the distribution of premier park and recreation features across the city, giving priority to adding features in underserved areas.
- Help shape the built form of the city by developing and/or implementing park plans to acquire and/or develop parklands in current or projected growth areas of the city. Future parklands may be owned by the City or home owners associations, but will still be built to meet resident's needs.
- Periodically examine data from household and population growth shifts to identify trends.
- Ensure park access for all residents by providing parks within an easy walk from their homes (up to ½ mile).
- Work with stakeholders to identify and support multi-mode transportation corridors between parks, with preference given to routes that encourage non-motorized linkages between parks.

#### GOAL:

Focused land management supports current and future generations.

#### STRATEGIES:

- Maintain a vital park system for city residents with a thoughtful acquisition and disposition plan and practice.
- Acquire and develop land that meets one or more of the criteria (*in priority order*):
  1. Fulfills park needs for growing areas or implements adopted park plans
  2. Meets the needs of areas underserved due to poor access or insufficient parkland acreage per household
  3. Provides trail connections and access to natural areas.
  4. Establishes clear park boundaries
  5. Promotes ecological function
  6. Secures unique sites or facilities
- Ensure parcels considered for disposition meet one or more of the following criteria: removing the parcel does not diminish recreation or environmental function of the park system, the parcel is not accessible by the public, the parcel does not serve the needs of individuals within a growth area of the city or is not part of an adopted park plan, and the parcel is too small for future park or natural development.
- Monitor and update lease and joint-use agreements to meet current and anticipated park and recreation needs.



## VISION THEME 3: GOALS AND STRATEGIES:

### *Dynamic parks* that shape the city character and meet diverse community needs

#### GOAL: (CONTINUED)

Focused land management supports current and future generations.

#### STRATEGIES (CONTINUED):

- Pursue land trades when the trade will result in equal or more parkland that provide greater function to the park system.
- Manage parklands in compliance with any deed, use, or other agreement restrictions such as grant agreements.



#### GOAL:

Financially independent and sustainable parks prosper.

#### STRATEGIES:

- Increase revenue and develop sustainable spending practices throughout the system that consider the short and long term costs and priorities for projects, programs and/or services.
- Work with necessary partners to enact and implement a park dedication

ordinance to ensure new city development is adequately served with park and recreation facilities.

- Prepare for future opportunities by increasing funding reserves and establishing a park endowment fund.
- Obtain grants that further the work of the Mesa PRCF Department.
- Engage local businesses, corporations, foundations, and individuals in sustainable partnerships that build on the value of the system without jeopardizing aesthetics or over commercializing the public realm.
- Create opportunities for entrepreneurs, both non-profit and for-profit, to enrich the park and recreation experience and implement innovative approaches to revenue generation.
- Work with all levels of government to secure consistent, dedicated funding, for park development, maintenance, and operation.
- Develop and maintain a five-year financial plan that includes disaster recovery provisions.
- Implement a revenue management plan that identifies strategies for cost recovery of program operating expenses.
- Provide long term sponsorship and/or financing of the department's scholarship program to provide registration fee assistance to those in need.

## VISION THEME 3: GOALS AND STRATEGIES:

### Dynamic parks

that shape the city character and meet diverse community needs

#### GOAL:

Through outreach and research, park and recreation services are relevant today and tomorrow.

#### STRATEGIES:

- Create a community outreach and research plan that focuses on identifying the park and recreation needs of the city's dynamic populations.
- Evaluate current facility and program delivery based on key indicators and park visitations to determine the best way to meet the park and recreation needs of residents and visitors.
- Regularly review social and demographic trends that affect service delivery. Be the first to identify and address new recreational needs and to reposition those recreational facilities that are no longer relevant.
- Ensure staff is prepared to engage a diverse public by training staff to be sensitive to the park system's users, recruiting bilingual staff, and recruiting and retaining people of different ethnicities for staff and volunteer positions.
- Engage and involve residents in identifying the program, service, and facility needs of their respective communities.

#### GOAL:

Easily accessible information supports enjoyment and use of the park and recreation system.

#### STRATEGIES:

- Implement communication strategies to provide timely, accurate information to Mesa residents and visitors, including those who do not speak English.
- Enhance technology to share information effectively and efficiently across the organization and with the community.
- Cultivate open communication with other departments in the City, County, State, and other elected officials and appointed groups.
- Develop and implement a customer service program, including training to ensure customer service techniques are applied effectively and consistently across the organization.
- Effectively utilize technology to make program registration and enjoyment of services easy.



## VISION THEME 4

### *A safe place* to play, recreate, contemplate, and celebrate

Keeping the parks safe requires a long-term commitment to people and places by the City of Mesa PRCF Department and its many partners. Safety, both real and perceived, is achieved through a combination of preventive and corrective measures. Delivering consistently safe parks requires that they are well maintained and designed to prevent accidental injury. The City of Mesa PRCF Department is committed to making choices that foster the safety and well being of its park visitors and staff.

*"The public still perceives parks and recreation as a necessary social institution, one with a definite purpose... recreation and parks benefits the economy through its relationship to travel and tourism and aids in the reduction of healthcare costs through its relationship to health and fitness while helping to combat delinquent behavior."*

*~Doug Sessoms*

### **Prevent, Protect, Welcome**

Safety within the City of Mesa park system is a core responsibility of the PRCF Department. While the City's police force is a key factor in fulfilling this responsibility, all staff members play a role in keeping parks safe. Park and recreation programs inspire youth to engage positively in their communities. High standards for removing graffiti, addressing vandalism, and keeping the parks in good condition set high expectations for behavior. Park Rangers build relationships with youth and communities and redirect behavior through education instead of arrests and citations whenever possible, renewal and development of new facilities and amenities are designed with safety in mind.

**Findings:** The following findings helped shape the goals and strategies for Vision Theme 2:

### Community Outreach and Research

Aside from a lack of leisure time, Mesa residents and park visitors report that their concerns about safety are one of the greatest barriers to utilizing the park system. Their concerns include both personal and property safety and range from fears about off-leash animals to gang activity. People want to see more police and/or ranger presence in parks, enhanced lighting and a more visible staff role in parks and recreation facilities safety.

Additional recommendations for improving the safety of the parks include:

- Greater adult presence
- Well-maintained facilities
- Clear expectations for park users
- Well-designed facilities
- Multi-cultural and bilingual staff

### ■ Walking and activity groups

### ■ Community dialogue about the safety needs within parks

### An Integrated Approach

Police and Park Rangers alone cannot provide a safe park system. Each employee and park visitor plays a role in fostering a safe, welcoming environment. An approach is needed that integrates prevention through safe design, well-maintained facilities, proper training of park visitors and all park staff, clear communication, and swift modification of inappropriate behavior.

### City Wide Trends

Fluctuations in crime statistics across the city play a large role in real and perceived safety of the park system. Between 2003 and 2009, reported crimes

across the city have continued to decrease, in 2003 the reported crimes used in this report ranged from 28,479 in 2003 to 18,079 in 2009. These numbers include Part I crimes such as trespassing, drug possession, vandalism, etc. On average --- % of all Part I crimes committed across the city occurred in parks. Crimes most commonly reported in parks are vandalism and theft.

### Work Place Safety

Safety at work is also important to the City of Mesa. Staff that works safely are more likely to provide a safe environment for park visitors. Considerable time and resources are required to adequately train staff and provide a safe working environment. Work place safety is further discussed in the values section.



## VISION THEME 4: GOALS AND STRATEGIES:

*A safe place*

To play, recreate, contemplate, and celebrate

### GOAL:

Positive recreation experiences and welcoming parks prevent crime.

### STRATEGIES:

- Get to know and positively influence youth.
- Communicate clear expectations of behavior to park visitors.
- Train all staff to recognize and divert dangerous activity.
- Encourage community connections by focusing on intergenerational activities at neighborhood, community and regional parks and facilities with positive activities for all ages.
- Implement a “Safety First” policy in which programs are cancelled when established minimum safety standards are not met.
- Ensure that staff is visible, welcoming, and positive.
- Set park hours to promote safe use of the parks and safety in the community.
- Ensure facilities are well maintained (see park facilities renewal goal in Vision Theme 3).
- Establish neighborhood involvement to report problems within parks and facilities to the appropriate authorities.

### GOAL:

Residents, park visitors, and staff make safe choices in the parks.

### STRATEGIES:

- Educate park visitors on personal safety and actions they can take to avoid being a target of crime.
- Install clear signage that instructs park visitors to safely use or access park amenities.
- Teach drivers, pedestrians and cyclists the rules of the road and path safety.
- Educate residents and park visitors about the negative impacts of feeding or interacting with wild animals.
- Dedicate staff time to safety training, and risk assessment to prevent accidents that can lead to injuries and lost staff time.





## VISION THEME 4: GOALS AND STRATEGIES:

*A safe place*

*To play, recreate, contemplate, and celebrate*

### GOAL:

Intervention and communication reduce safety concerns.

### STRATEGIES:

- Identify recurring safety concerns and devise new prevention plans using available resources. Eliminating a service or facility will happen only when attempts to modify the problematic behavior have failed.
- Increase visibility of Park Rangers and park ambassadors.
- Modify behavior that may cause harm to persons, the environment, or property within the park system.
- Develop and maintain a disaster recovery plan for the park system.
- Facilitate quick emergency response by installing distinguishable markers and building addresses that are recognized by emergency services.
- Facilitate citizen communications to report issues using latest technological offerings such as smart phone applications.

### GOAL:

Parks are safe and welcoming by design.

### STRATEGIES:

- Design parks to meet or exceed or safety standards, building codes and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.
- Develop and implement lighting standards by park amenity to promote

a safe, welcoming environment while respecting natural habitats.

- Provide access to restrooms, drinking water, bike racks and shade throughout the park system.
- Monitor park amenities to ensure safety standards and codes are continually met, and develop plans to meet standards or remove facilities that do not meet minimum safety requirements.
- Adopt new technology proven to effectively enhance safety throughout the system.
- Work with neighborhoods and other City departments to provide safe bicycle routes to and within parks.

### GOAL:

Communities, public and private partners, and staff cooperate to promote safety.

### STRATEGIES:

- Support efforts to raise community awareness of safety in parks and facilities.
- Cooperate with other agencies and City departments to develop an integrated approach to chronic issues within and beyond park borders.
- Work with neighborhoods to identify necessary safety improvements within parks.
- Pursue public and private partnerships to promote safety in the parks and expand available resources.

Values guide how staff and volunteers do their work. Applying the values of good conduct — respect, integrity, fairness, and dignity — sets an example for behavior within the park system.

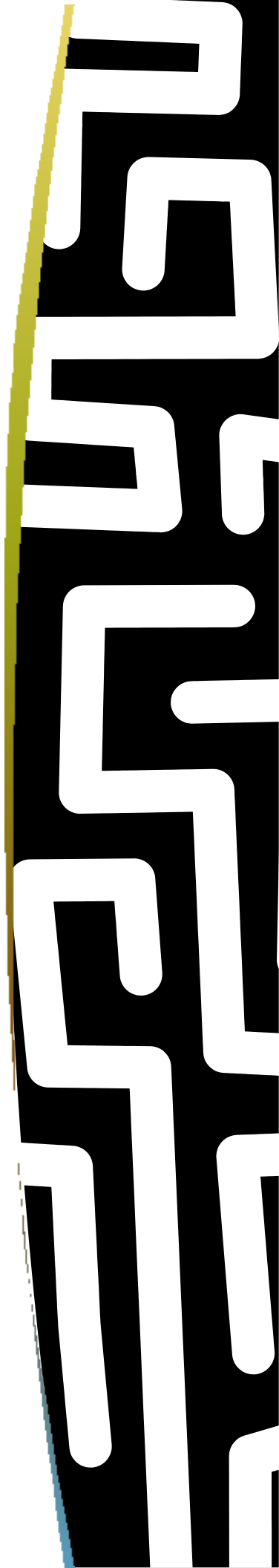
The Mesa Parks, Recreation and Commercial Facilities Department has identified four additional values to apply to all of the work the department does. These values are:

**Sustainability** Meet current park and recreation needs without sacrificing the ability of future generation to meet their own needs by balancing environmental, economic, and equity concerns.

**Visionary Leadership** Respect the vision and leadership that built the park and recreation system and recognize the need for ongoing leadership in achieving excellence.

**Safety** Work safely to support a thriving work environment and an outstanding experience for residents and visitors.

**Responsiveness and Innovation** Anticipate and thoughtfully respond to the diverse needs of the city's neighborhoods, continually seeking ways to better deliver park and recreation services.



# Values guide how staff and volunteers do their work.

## Sustainability

Meet current park and recreation needs without sacrificing the ability of the future to meet their own needs by balancing environmental, economic, and equity concerns.

**Environment** Sustain and enhance parklands, waters and urban forests.

**Economic** Develop short-term and long-term financial stability of the department.

**Equity** Provide residents with opportunities to improve their quality of life and well-being through outstanding parks and recreation services that are suited to their respective needs.

### Action:

- Identify opportunities to test and/or showcase best practices throughout the system.
- Provide park system infrastructure at a sustainable rate.
- Reduce energy use in building, vehicles and equipment.
- Purchase “green” products made from recycled and post consumer waste material content and focus on quality, not quantity.
- Choose economically sustainable options, taking into consideration staff time, resource use, and life span costs with the understanding that initial costs might be greater than other methods.
- Balance the economic and environmental costs and benefits of providing parks and recreation across the city.
- Build a diverse workforce at all levels of the organization that reflects the city.

## Visionary Leadership

Respect the vision and leadership that built the park and recreation system and recognize the need for ongoing leadership in achieving excellence.

**A visionary sees the future and a leader gets you there.** The PRCF Department is the product of both vision and leadership. To further this tradition the department must recruit bright, talented staff and volunteers. It must also cultivate new leadership, encourage implementation of best practices, and provide opportunities to explore new ideas.

### Action:

- Learn and apply best practices.
- Participate in training opportunities.
- Openly explore new ideas and trends.
- Foster new leadership.
- Share knowledge with co-workers.
- Encourage bold, effective ideas
- Increase training opportunities.

## Safety

Work safely to support a thriving environment and an outstanding park experience for residents and visitors.

It is important to the City of Mesa that the work of the organization be done safely. Setting and achieving high goals for safety in the workplace is essential to reducing the cost of injury and loss of staff time. Commitment to this value means that staff are trained to safely complete their work and that unsafe situations in the working environment are identified and addressed. As a result, it will be possible to place more focus on providing outstanding programs, services, and facilities for residents and visitors.

### Action:

- Dedicate staff time to safety policy development, risk management, and safety training.
- Participate in periodic safety trainings and share safety information with co-workers and residents.
- Support the work of the staff safety committees.
- Report and address safety concerns promptly to ensure safety of residents and staff.
- Be visible, welcoming, and professional.
- Implement and revisit safety agreements developed by PRCF staff to provide safe, clean welcoming parks and facilities.
- Eliminate on-the-job injuries by staying informed and following safety guidelines.

## Responsiveness and Innovation

Anticipate and thoughtfully respond to the diverse needs of the city's neighborhoods, continually seeking ways to better deliver park and recreation services.

A successful park system is relevant to the community it serves. This requires acting on knowledge of the park and recreation needs of the community, as well as providing visitors with customer service that maximizes their experience. The department must not only react to change, but anticipate and address it with ingenuity, creativity, and innovation.

### Action:

- Research and report observations on the changing needs of residents, visitors, and staff.
- Provide excellent customer service with every visitor interaction.
- Stay informed and provide visitors with accurate information.
- Systematically research and respond to trends, opportunities, and external influences.
- Look for innovative ways to provide park and recreation services.



## Decision Principles

A unified approach to decision making will swiftly propel the organization toward a common direction. The following decision principles will be considered when making decision with a system-wide impact.

### Identified Community Need and Demographics

The research conducted for this plan reinforces the need for basing program and facility decisions on specific community needs and demographics, since parks and recreation needs vary across the city. Moving forward, emphasis will be placed on researching community needs and demographics of the area. Equity, therefore, will be measured by how well a community's needs are addressed.

### Quality versus Quantity

The amenities provided to meet the park and recreation needs of communities will be high quality and sustainable. Overbuilt or under-utilized facilities will be removed and replaced with sustainable options or other amenities that better meet the needs of community. Amenities that have completed their useful life-cycle, especially those with a blighted appearance, will be removed, and, as funding becomes available, replaced with new amenities.

### Embracing Technology

Beyond gadgets, video games, and cyberspace, technology is transforming the delivery of meaningful park and recreation experiences: new playground equipment enhances a child's experience, new modes of communication increase information sharing, and renewable energy sources reduce operating costs. Decision making will embrace technology to better serve the community.



A unified approach to decision making will swiftly propel the organization toward a common direction.

### Fostering a New Face for Partnerships

Partnerships are commonplace for the PRCF Department, often resulting in enhanced service delivery. Some however, are less beneficial. In the future, the department will evaluate partnerships on an ongoing basis and will actively seek a new contingent of partners. The decision to enter or rejuvenate a partnership will be based on how it contributes to the organization's mission, values, goals, and strategies. Non-traditional partners that provide new opportunities for residents and are consistent with the organizations mission will be encouraged.

### Focusing on the Activity, Then the Infrastructure

In the 1970's and 1980's, when much of the park system's infrastructure was built, the demographics of the city were considerably more homogeneous than they are today. In that era, evenly spacing infrastructure around the city was an effective delivery model. Today, new recreation trends, shifting demographics, and more private recreation options highlight the need for a new model. Infrastructure decisions will begin by determining the need for a particular recreation activity and the value and service it delivers. After thorough evaluation of what the department already offers, the status of other service providers, and existing infrastructure, infrastructure will be provided to meet service goals for that activity. Service goals for an activity will be based on demographics of an area, identified community need, and the identified target audience for the activity.

### Sustainable Rate

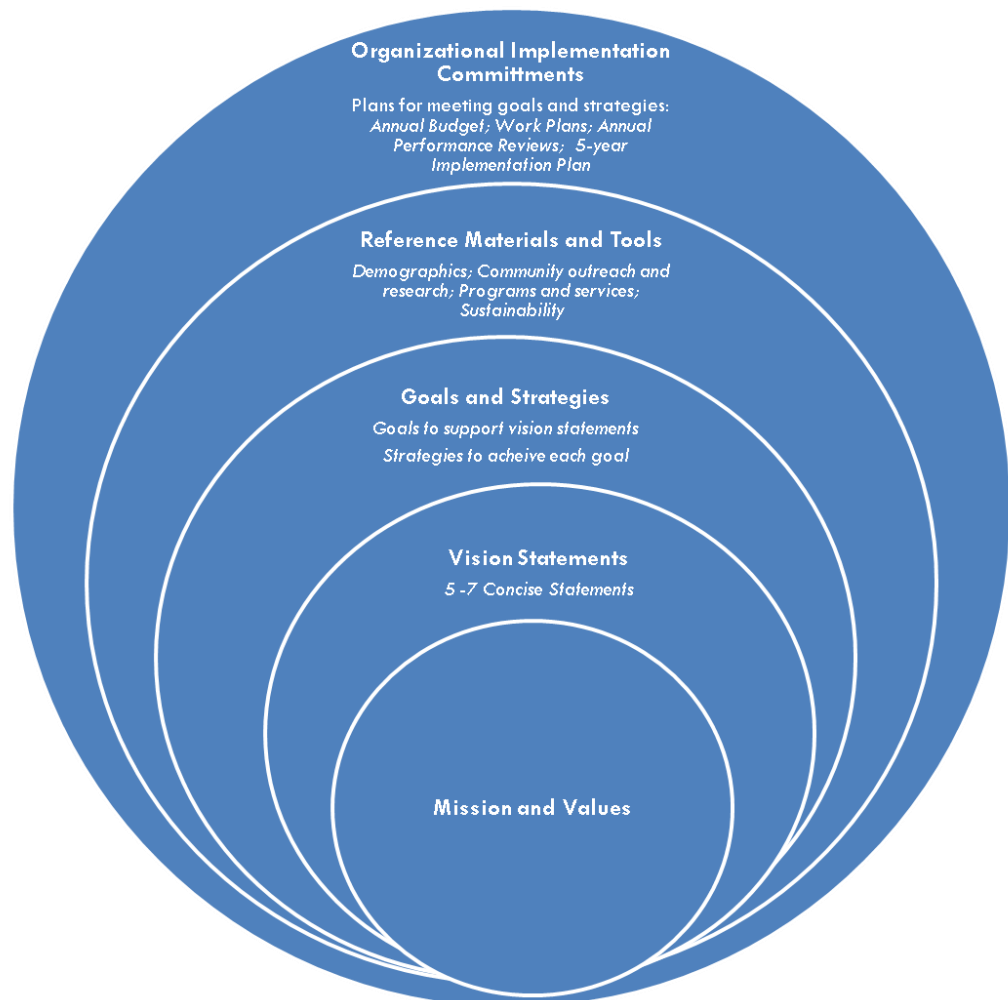
Increasing operational costs, environmental regulations, expanding requests for services, land use pressures, environmental degradation, and social disparity can create a sense of scarcity and compromise the long-term vitality of an organization. An alternative is to provide services at a sustainable rate, such as providing infrastructure that can be reasonably maintained, setting realistic program and service delivery targets, or modifying land management techniques to increase efficiency. Future decisions will support a sustainable park system that prevents crisis situations, protects the land for future generations, and actively balances services across the city.

## Organizational Implementation Commitments

This section outlines how the Mesa Parks, Recreation and Commercial Facilities Department will use this plan to guide the department to 2025. A complete review of this plan is recommended to begin in 2017.

### Planning for Change

The Gold Medal 2025 plan consists of a number of key elements that complement and support each other to provide simple, concise direction. Each part of the plan has a function. The mission articulates why the organization exists. This is supported by values, which identify how the organization performs its work. Vision statements follow, describing what the organization hopes to become by 2025. Goals represent incremental steps toward accomplishing the vision, and strategies set out plans or specific directions that lead to the goals. The chart below indicates how these separate statements support each other. Organizational implementation commitments are the base of the structure.



## Planning for Change (Continued):

Three (3) primary processes will ensure that the work of the department reflects the direction provided in the Gold Medal 2025 plan. These processes are:

**Five year Implementation Plan** The PRCF Department will rely on a five-year implementation plan updated annually, as a roadmap for achieving the strategies, goals,

*Annual work plans will help manage workflow and ensure that daily work corresponds to the direction set forth in the Gold Medal 2025 Plan.*

and ultimately the vision of the Gold Medal 2025 plan. This implementation plan will reflect specific tactics, measures of success, timetables, and resources required for a five-year period.

**Work Plans** Each division, and work group will develop annual work plans that tie to the strategies, goals, and visions outlined in the Gold Medal 2025 Plan. Developed annually these plans will include indicators and will help manage workflow and ensure that daily work corresponds to the direction set forth

in the Gold Medal 2025 plan. The actions set forth in these plans will be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-framed.

**Annual Budget** Annual budget requests by each division and work group will be tied to the strategies, goals, and visions outlined in the Gold Medal 2025 plan. The budgeting process will allow spending across the organization to relate to both the implementation plan and the Gold Medal 2025 Plan. Financial reporting will correspond to the plans strategies, goals, and vision statements.

*Details about park management, future park development, and the goals, objectives and strategies for providing specific recreation opportunities will be captured in separate complimentary plans. These documents are:*

**Future Development of Planning Documents** As an overarching guiding document the Gold Medal 2025 Plan calls for additional planning in several areas. This future planning will allow for greater exploration, evaluation, and community research on several topics. Plans identified for development in the comprehensive plan include (not a comprehensive list): a land management plan, a natural area plan, a revenue management plan, a recreation activity plan, and a sustainability plan. These plans will be structured so they can easily be updated as social trends change, population grows and shifts, and as research reveals best practices.

*Future planning will allow for greater exploration, evaluation, and community research on several topics."*



## Organizational Implementation Commitments

### Measuring Progress

Each direction suggested in the Gold Medal 2025 Plan may be achieved by numerous methods. The professional expertise and experience of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, City Council and staff will enable the organization to achieve the vision set forth. Careful monitoring will allow staff to determine if a selected course of action is achieving desired outcomes, allowing corrections to be made and successful outcomes celebrated. To comprehensively monitor the progress of the PRCF Department, evaluation will be viewed from three perspectives: impact on community, organization performance reviews, and individual performance reviews.

**Community Impact** Measuring the department's community impact helps determine if the community's parks and recreation needs are being met. Measuring the impact of a program or project becomes increasingly important in a tight funding climate and is a key to judging the effectiveness of the Gold Medal 2025 Plan. Key indicators that anticipate program and project outcomes will be identified and monitored over time. The information obtained from these measurements will allow the five-year implementation plan and work plans to be adjusted appropriately to achieve the vision of the organization.

**Organizational Performance Reviews** An organizational performance review will measure the overall success of the organization in meeting its vision. Key indicators relating to the goals, vision, and values will be selected and monitored on a yearly basis. The results of the review will allow appropriate changes to be made to the five-year implementation plan and work plans.

**Individual Performance Appraisal Process** Employees move the organization toward the vision set by City Council and they will be evaluated on the work they do to achieve that vision. Employees will also be evaluated on how their work upholds the values of the organization. This tool will be used to effectively direct the skills of individuals and teams toward achieving the vision of the organization and will include the opportunities for personal growth. Performance appraisals will help identify when adjustments should be made and when achievements should be celebrated. Individual performance appraisals will also help supervisors monitor workflow and keep their annual plans on target.

# Key Challenges and Opportunities

## Environmental Pressures

Today due to invasive species, tree diseases, and pollution the management of natural areas, trees, and water bodies requires a new level of investment of both time and finances. This need for investment is expected to grow as future development continues to reduce the availability of natural resources and as new invasive species and diseases are introduced into the parklands.

## Signs of the Times

Local, state, national, and world events also shape the perceptions and needs of city residents and visitors. Key factors include:

- Trends toward global conflict have led to greater interest in emergency preparedness. Park facilities provide a possible resource to city emergency preparedness plans.
- Economic trends including rising health care costs, anti-tax movements, and increasing fuel and material costs are reducing the resources available to provide park and recreation services.
- A greater understanding of the environment and recognition of climate change will increase the need for park operations and facilities to continue focusing on issues like carbon dioxide emissions and chemical use in parks.
- An increase in the appeal of public and private partnerships, which was well documented in the community outreach and research, presents an opportunity to expand service delivery in cooperation with local businesses, and public and private entities.

## Heritage and Historic Preservation

As the park system ages, its features gain historic importance. This opens up opportunities for greater historic interpretation as well as new programming. It can also increase maintenance costs and limit the introduction of new facilities into the system. These limitations can be minimized or eliminated by integrating historic preservation into early planning stages.

## New Recreation Trends

Recreation is shaped by a number of factors, from shifting demographics to the introduction of new activities. Local, state, and national trends influencing recreation in Mesa include:

- Greater number of young adults are pursuing active lifestyles.
- The introduction of club sports for youth is leading to greater sport specialization and year round engagement in one sport versus a rotation of sports throughout the year.
- Interest in traditional sports, including baseball, softball, golf, and football is declining while interest in non-traditional sports such as skateboarding, mountain biking, soccer, rugby, and lacrosse is increasing.
- Older adults, particularly Baby Boomers, are re-writing the script for aging by participating in active recreation decades longer than previous generations. They also have more discretionary income than previous generations, and are increasingly applying those funds toward programming and activities for their grandchildren.
- New technology is enhancing performance and delivery of existing activities.
- Self-directed activities such as running, biking, gardening, and other hobbies are popular among adults.
- More leisure time, especially among youth, is spent enjoying a multitude of media, technology and entertainment options.
- An increase in foreign-born residents requires focus on reducing language barriers and gaining a better understanding of the recreational needs for these adults.

While several trends indicate a growth in recreation or leisure activities, especially among adults, competition for leisure time requires greater attention to delivering programs and services that residents value. It is especially important to maintain strong public support for the parks and recreation system during challenging economic periods.





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